



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh and Gazi Tank captain Mohammad Ashraful plays a bowler's back drive against his national team deputy and Abahani skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) during a Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Gazi sink Abahani

Bowlers rule the roost

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The first big match of the Premier Division Cricket League turned into a big disappointment when star-studded Gazi Tank thrashed defending champions Abahani by six wickets in a low-scoring match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

A six-wicket burst by young paceran Robiul Islam made sure that national captain Mohammad Ashraful-led Gazi were set for another stroll in the park against Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's much vaunted sky blues.

The victory also completed a delightful double for newcomers Gazi after their eight-wicket triumph in the Twenty20 final against Abahani last week.

On a day when the bowlers dictated terms, national pacer Sajedul Islam took a five-for which included the league's first hat-trick as Mohammedan cruised to a massive eight-wicket victory against Partex at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium after their disappointing tied game against Pegasus on Sunday.

Another Tigers paceran Mahbubul Alam hogged the spotlight at BKSP as Biman rode on the right-arm pacer's five wickets to score a six-wicket win over Young Pegasus. It was Biman's second successive win.

GAZI-ABAHANI

Although it was a face-off between the two most exciting exponents of the country's cricket Ashraful and Mashrafe, it was heart rendering to see the stands almost empty at Mirpur. If this was a disappointing sight then what took place in the middle was even more dismal.

It was an exhibition of poor cricket in the league's first big match mainly because of Abahani's reckless batting. Credits must go to young pacer Robiul who exploited his outswingers well to wrap up Abahani's innings for 105 runs in 24.3 overs.

"It's actually poor batting," reflected national team coach Jamie Siddons after witnessing the first-half of the game.

Like the previous game, Tamim Iqbal and Rony Talukdar got off to a confident start but the rot began once Tamim was trapped in front by Robiul, ending a 30-run opening stand. Tamim was unhappy with the decision and stood his ground for quite sometime before trudging back to the dressing room.

Rony, an aggressive opener who scored a century in the first match, was Robiul's second victim after top scoring for Abahani with 30 off 22 balls that featured five boundaries. After that

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PHOTO: STAR

SIX SHOOTER ROBIUL: Gazi Tank young paceran Robiul Islam shows the ball with which he destroyed Abahani with a six-wicket burst at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Another Bukola treble

SPORTS REPORTER



Alamu Bukola slammed his second hat-trick of the league as Mohammedan Sporting Club brightened their chances of finishing runners-up in the Citycell B League with an emphatic 4-0 win

over Khulna Abahani in their second leg tie at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Nigerian striker, who struck his first treble against Muktiyoddha Sangsad, scored three goals in the first-half and added another after the breather to become top scorer in the league with 16 goals by surpassing Sheikh Russel's Alfaz Ahmed's 15.

Having Abahani already confirmed the title with a match in hand, the only interest left in the league is the runners-up race between Mohammedan and Sheikh Russel and yesterday's result put the popular Black and Whites in an advantageous position.

The winners improved their tally to 41 points from 19 outings, six points ahead of Sheikh Russel, who have two matches in hand. Mohammedan will need only one point

when they visit to Chittagong to play their last match against Chittagong Abahani on February 16 to become runners-up for the second successive season. If they fail to get the point from their last game in the port city and Sheikh Russel win their remaining two games against Rahmatganj and Farashganj, then both sides will have equal points and have to lock horns for a play-off to decide the runners-up.

On the other hand the sixth defeat ensured Khulna Abahani's demotion from the top flight as the Sky Blues from the southern city earned only five points from 19 matches, five points behind 10th-placed struggling Muktiyoddha Sangsad.

Back to the day's match, Bukola put Mohammedan ahead only in the eighth minute when he placed an Enamul Haq Sharif pass home inside the danger zone.

Then referee Abdul Hannan Miron awarded Mohammedan a spot kick following Khulna Abahani defender Ranjit Kumar Paul's handling a shot from opponent Hazem Khaled Mahmood.

The lanky Bukola made no mistake to convert the penalty to double the margin in the 24th minute. Just after two minutes, Sharif

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Asif banned for a year

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Asif was on Wednesday slapped with a one-year ban from the Indian Premier League (IPL) for failing a dope test during last year's inaugural tournament.

Asif, 26, tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone during the opening season of the Twenty20 tournament in 2008, in which he turned out for the Delhi Daredevils franchise.

The bowler, who is suspended from playing official cricket by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), will not be allowed to take part in the second edition of the lucrative tournament in April and May.

The ban, which Asif said he was considering appealing, means little since he himself sought release from his franchise last month even as the Pakistan government refused permission

for its players to play in the IPL this year for security reasons.

A release from the IPL drugs tribunal said Asif's ban would run from September 2008 for a year.

"The year's ineligibility for Mohammad Asif will be from September 22, 2008 as that was the date when the Indian Premier League had imposed the suspension order," it said.

Asif told the tribunal last month that his nandrolone levels had been enhanced by the use of eye drops which contained the substance.

The tribunal comprised former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar, lawyer Shirish Gupte and medical specialist Ravi Bapat.

Asif was detained at Dubai airport for 19 days last June after 0.24 grams of opium were found in his wallet. After being deported to Pakistan, he was told he had also failed the IPL test.

The International Cricket Council, the

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Mahela quits captaincy

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Mahela Jayawardene on Wednesday decided to step down as Sri Lanka's cricket captain after the upcoming Tests in Pakistan, saying he was doing it "in the best interests" of the team.

"This is something I have been considering for some time as it has been my long-held belief that my successor should have at least 18 months in the job to imprint his vision on the team for the 2011 World Cup," Jayawardene, 31, said in a statement.

Jayawardene's decision to quit came after India completed a 4-1 rout of Sri Lanka in a recent one-day series, although he did not mention this as a factor.

The middle-order bats-

man, who led Sri Lanka for the first time in April 2004, did not play in Tuesday's Twenty20 international here, which India won by three wickets.

"After much thought, I have concluded that the right time has now come for fresh leadership to takeover," said



MAHELA JAYAWARDENE

Jayawardene, who was named the International Cricket Council's captain of the year in 2006.

"It was not an easy decision to make because being the Sri Lanka captain has been the source of enormous pride. I am very grateful to have been granted the honour of leading the team."

Jayawardene however made it clear he was not quitting the team altogether. "I look forward now to extending my full support to my successor and hope to play a major part in the team's success during coming years as a batsman," he added.

Sri Lanka Cricket chief executive Duleep Mendis said Jayawardene's resignation had been accepted, but no decision had been taken on the new captain.

Kumar Sangakkara, the

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WOMEN'S CRICKET

Lanka take on Pakistan today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second leg of the Grameenphone Tri-Nation Women's Cricket Tournament starts at the Shaheed Flight Lieutenant Motiur Rahman Stadium in Khulna today with Pakistan aiming to turn the table on Sri Lanka.

Pakistan lost when the two teams met previously in Bogra which gave Sri Lanka two wins in two games. The Lankan ladies go into this game with a clear psychological advantage over their opponents and a victory will confirm their place in the February 17th final in Dhaka with a match in hand against hosts Bangladesh who are yet to win a match in meet.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP notched their second consecutive win beating Swadheenata KS by a solitary goal in a Citycell 3rd Division Football League match at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Ali Akbar Kanan scored the match-winning goal for the national sports training institute team in the 65th minute.

BKSP secured six points from two matches while Swadheenata remained at three points, also playing two matches.

The day's other match between Anirban Sangha and Kasaituly ended in a goalless draw at the same venue.

Anirban collected six points from four outings while Kasaituly have bagged five points from three matches.

KERANIGANJ CRICKET
Borishur AU Shomity defeated Amirabagh Friends Association by two wickets yesterday in the Keraniganj Cricket League.

Borishur, who bowled their opponents out for 199 in 36.2 overs, chased down the winning target in the 49th over.

In another match, Kalindi beat Shanti Niketan also by two wickets in a low-scoring match where the winners fruitfully pursued a target of 107 in 39.2 overs.

WOMEN'S CHESS

Sharmin Sultana Shirin of Narayanganj and Masuda Begum of Barisal jointly lead the table with 3.5 points each after the fourth round of the Parachute 30th National Women Chess qualifiers at the federation hall room yesterday.

Nazrana Khan Eva, Zakia Sultana, Farjana Hossain Anne, Reshma Jebin, Mehmaz Ahmed, Jahanara Haque and Rokshana Titi share the second position with 3 points each.

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Breathtaking Brazil

Football

AFP, London

Brazil forward Robinho shattered Italy coach Marcello Lippi's record bid with a breathtaking display in his side's 2-0 friendly win over the world champions here on Tuesday.

Robinho made the opener for Manchester City club-mate Elano with a defence-splitting pass and scored a sublime second himself to give Brazil an impressive victory at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium.

Lippi was attempting to set a new world record for consecutive unbeaten matches by an international coach, but his run ended at 31 as he suffered a first loss with Italy since defeat against Slovenia during his first spell in charge way back in 2004.

As Lippi reacquaints himself with the unpleasant taste of defeat, Brazil coach Dunga is finally looking more comfortable in one of football's most demanding jobs.

Dunga's perceived penchant for cautious tactics has riled some in Brazil but this performance should earn him some respect at last.

These two giants of the global game have won nine World Cups between them, contested two finals and produced some of the finest matches in the competition's history, but this was their first meeting for 12 years.

In the intervening decade each country had added another World Cup to their collection, yet both teams arrived in England with

plenty to prove after spluttering starts to their 2010 qualifying campaigns.

With that in mind it wasn't surprising that the match started at a frenetic pace. Italy had the ball in the net in the opening moments when Fabio Grosso met Andrea Pirlo's lofted pass with a volley past Julio Cesar but the left-back's effort was ruled out for offside.

The absence of AC Milan playmaker Kaka gave Dunga a chance to bring Ronaldinho back from a three-match exile, while Adriano, carrying more weight than ever, was also in the Selecao's forward line.

While those two remain two of Brazil's star attractions, the relatively unheralded Elano has become an integral part of the team under Dunga and the right-sided midfielder underlined his importance as he opened the scoring in the 13th minute.

A swift and incisive exchange of passes with Robinho opened up the Italian defence and Elano gracefully applied the finishing touch as he guided his shot past Gianluigi Buffon.

Brazil have become accustomed to playing friendlies at Arsenal in the last two years and they were clearly in the mood. Even a defence as parsimonious as Italy's couldn't contain them.

If Elano's opener had been a tasty appetiser, then Robinho's strike in the 27th minute was a truly sumptuous main course.

Quickly dispossessing Pirlo as he dwelt on the ball in his own penalty area, Robinho teased Nicola Legrottaglie with a series of elaborate step-overs before wrong-footing

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PHOTO: AFP

Brazilian striker Robinho (L) heads the ball as Italy defender Fabio Grosso looks on during their international friendly match at the Emirates Stadium in London on Tuesday. Robinho set up the first goal and scored the other in Brazil's 2-0 win over the world champions.

What to WATCH

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Div Cricket League
Surjo Torun v Old DOHS
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur
BKSP v Victoria SC
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
City Club v Cricket Coaching School
Venue: BKSP
Citycell B League
Brothers Union v Farashganj
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 4:30pm

TALK TURKEY



Marcello Lippi
(Italy soccer coach)
"It's a surprise. I feel sorry for him. He is a good person, very funny. But this is a part of the job that happens."
On Luiz Felipe Scolari's sacking by Chelsea on Monday.

DIV-I CRICKET

Kalabagan start well

SPORTS REPORTER

Kalabagan thrashed Badda by 134 runs yesterday at the City Club Ground in a Dhaka First Division Cricket League match.

Badda made a regrettable decision after winning the toss and putting Kalabagan in, who went on to post a massive total of 281 runs for the loss of eight wickets. Veteran Pakistani batsman Tareq Mahmood hammered 87 for Kalabagan while Salahuddin was the other notable scorer with 54. In reply, Badda were bowled out for 147 in the 41st over with Apurbo and Rokibul picking up three wickets apiece.

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